THE BRITISH EMPIRE

BBC tv TIME-LIFE BOOKS 25p
No. 54

KINGS IN ALL BUT NAME
The Men Who Ruled India

Australia & New Zealand 70c South Africa 70c Canada 95c

THE BRITISH EMPIRE

BBC tv TIME-LIFE BOOKS 25p
No. 54

Editor Harold C. Field
Deputy Editor John Man
Picture Editor Jean I. Tennant
Design Consultant Louis Klein
Staff Writers Simon Rigge, Susan Hillaby, Heather Wyatt
Picture Researchers Marian Berman, Pamela Marke
Art Director Robert Hook
Assistant Art Director Graham Davis
Art Assistant Bridget Allan
Editorial Assistant Vanessa Kramer
Staff Photographer Eileen Tweedy
Partwork Director Kurt Medina
Sales Director George Gillespie
Consultants D.K.Fieldhouse, Lecturer in Commonwealth History and Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford
A.F.Madden, Reader in Commonwealth Government and Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford

PHILIP MASON, who wrote the main text of this issue, also uses the pen-name Philip Woodruff, under which he has published numerous books, notably *The Men Who Ruled India*. During his 20 years in India, he held senior posts in the Indian Civil Service. Later he became Director of the Institute of Race Relations, from which he retired in 1969. His recent books include *Patterns of Dominance* and *Race Relations*.

Subscriptions – These are available at £6·50 for six months, inclusive of postage and packing. For addresses outside of the United Kingdom, the rate is £8·75, inclusive of surface postage and packing.
Back Numbers – These are available at your local newsagent or may be secured by post for the inclusive price of 25p per issue. Be sure and specify which issue(s) you desire.
Orders for both subscriptions and back numbers should be sent, with remittance, to *The British Empire*, BBC Publications, 35 Marylebone High St., London W1M 4AA.
Binders – These may be ordered at £1·05 for the Standard edition and £1·75 for the Deluxe edition, either individually or on subscription. Orders, with remittance, should be sent to *British Empire Binders*, BBC Publications, P.O. Box No. 126, London SE1 5JZ.
NOTE: All above payments should be by crossed cheque/P.O.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: (*t*=top; *b*=bottom; *l*=left; *r*=right; *c*=centre).Cover: Knebworth House (home of the Lytton family) open to the public during the summer. Inside back cover: National Maritime Museum, London. By kind permission of Lord Avon 1494; Trustees of the British Museum 1487, 1488*tcr*, *tr* and *bl*, 1489*tr*, 1507; Dorset Military Museum, Dorchester 1485; Earl of Elgin for Bruce Family Collection 1489*bcl*, 1491*tcl*, 1501–5; Mary Evans Picture Library 1499*tr*; *The Graphic* 1499*b*; by kind permission of Lord Halifax 1490*br*; *Illustrated London News* 1511; India Office Library and Records 1489*bl*, 1490*bcl*, 1492/3, 1497, 1506, 1508/9; Keystone Press Agency Ltd 1491*bcl*; National Portrait Gallery, London 1488*tl*, *bcl* and *bcr*, 1489*tl*, *tcl*, *tcr* and *bcr*, 1490*tr* and *bl*; The Parker Gallery, London 1488*tcl*, 1512; Paul Popper Ltd 1490*tcl*, 1491*br*; *Punch* 1510; Radio Times Hulton Picture Library 1488*br*, 1490*tl*, *tcr* and *bcr*, 1491*tl*, *tcr*, *tr*, *bl* and *bcr*, 1498, 1499*tl*. PHOTOGRAPHERS: Bryan and Shear Ltd 1489*bcl*, 1491*tcl*, 1501–5; R.B.Fleming & Co. 1487, 1490*bcl*, 1492/3, 1497, 1508/9; Dmitri Kessel 1489*c*, 1490*c*, 1491*c*; Roynon Raikes 1488*tr*, 1490*br*; Eileen Tweedy cover, 1485, 1488*tcl*, *tcr* and *bl*, 1489*tr*, *bl* and *br*, 1499*b*, 1506/7, 1512, inside back cover.

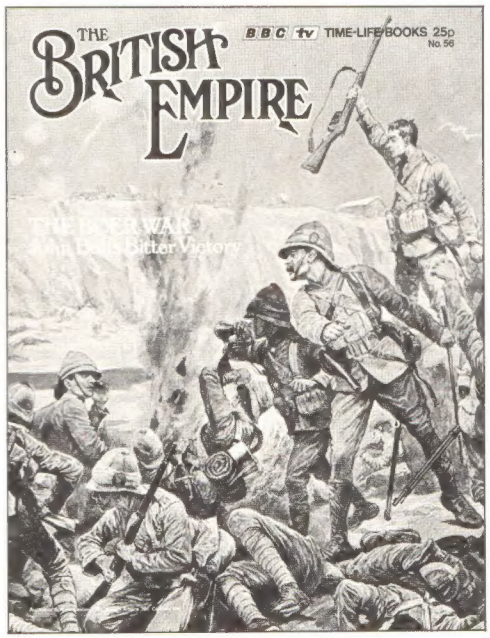
© 1973. Time-Life International (Nederland) B.V.

Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.

Published by Time-Life International (Nederland) B.V. in co-operation with the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Distributed in the U.K. by Time-Life International Ltd. and BBC Publications.

Printed in England by Jarrold and Sons Ltd. Norwich.



CONTENTS

1485. Kings in All but Name
How ordinary Englishmen, appointed by a trading company and later by the British Crown, were invested with all the trappings of Oriental suzerainty and – outwardly, at least – became the Kings of India.

1488. Picture Essay: Rulers of India
A portrait gallery of the 32 Governors-General and Viceroys who for 175 years ruled India.

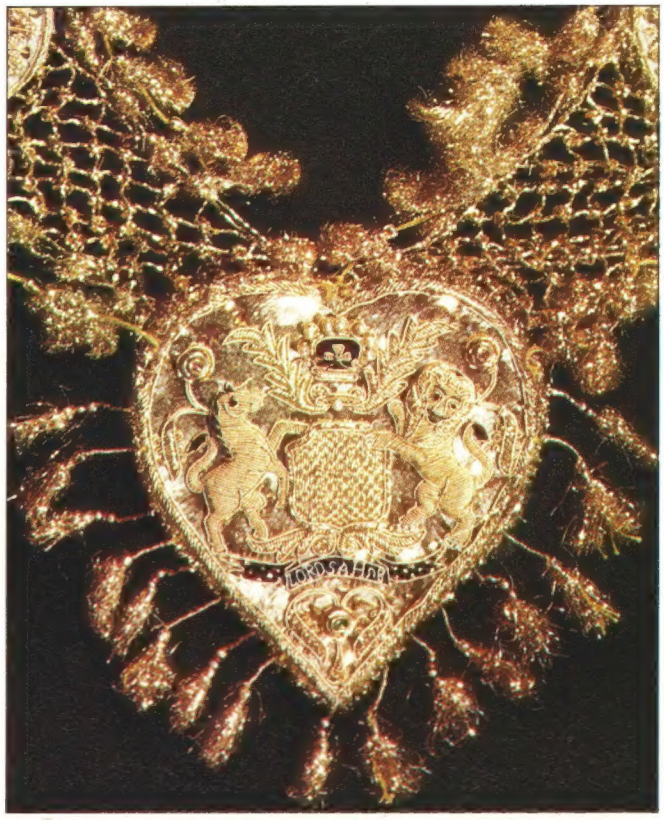
1492. Would-be Autocrats
In the 19th-Century, several Viceroys learned the hard way the limits of their powers.

1501. Picture Essay: Viceroy On Show and Off Duty
Scenes from the personal photograph album of a 19th-Century Viceroy reveal the human demands of the office and how one British family coped with them.

1506. Ceremonial Glitter
Behind the façade of viceregal magnificence, what was the substance of power? How much did the modern Viceroys accomplish for their subjects?

Cover: Lord Lytton, Viceroy, sits imperiously on the throne of India, which he dignified between 1876 and 1880. He wears the mantle of the Grand Master of the Order of the Star of India

KINGS IN ALL BUT NAME



This sumptuous pendant was a gift from a rajah to a Viceroy.

For nearly 175 years – from 1773 until 1947 – a dynasty of British rulers, matched only by royalty in power and prestige, shaped the destiny of India. Mostly aristocrats, they transcended the unseemly, commercial taint of former rule by the East India Company. Their power seemed almost absolute. Until the growth of better communications in the 1870s, their remoteness prevented immediate control from London. In India, they could overrule their advisers. Yet there were many checks on their freedom, hidden, perhaps, but no less effective for that. Despite their royal appearance, they were also servants – as several discovered to their cost.

by Philip Mason

They looked like Kings, the Governors-General and Viceroys of India. The pomp and ceremony that surrounded them was not less than a King's; all had to stand in their presence, women had to curtsy, and men bow. And behind the ceremonial was an administrative power that few Kings, indeed, few Prime Ministers, have known. The Viceroy was the topmost point of a pyramid. He was advised, it is true, by a Council and the Members of his Council were each responsible for special subjects; the Commander-in-Chief was the Member for Defence, there was a Member for Finance, a Home Member and so on. But the Viceroy not only himself held the portfolio for Foreign Affairs and relations with Indian states, but on any subject he could in the last resort override his Council. He was supreme; it looked as though he had absolute power.

There is a story of Kipling's, based on fact, which well illustrates the impressive structure of which the Viceroy was the apex. In 1885, Lord Dufferin the then Viceroy, invited Abdur Rahman, the Amir of Afghanistan, to meet him at Rawalpindi. One purpose of the meeting was to impress the Amir with the power of the Indian Empire. The British were always concerned that the Russians should not control or even influence Afghanistan and this could best be achieved by convincing the Afghans of British strength and at the same time paying the Amir a subsidy. The highlight of the meeting was a military parade at which 30,000 men, having marched past, turned into a line and formed "one solid wall of men, horses and guns. Then it came on straight toward the Viceroy and the Amir, and as it got nearer the ground began to shake. . . . Then the advance stopped dead, the ground stood still, the whole line saluted."

In Kipling's story, the Afghans were properly impressed and he heard one of them asking an Indian officer how it was done. He replied: "'There was an order and they obeyed, . . . Mule, horse, elephant or bullock, he obeys his driver and the driver his sergeant and the sergeant his lieutenant and the lieutenant his captain . . .'" and so on, to the general and the Viceroy, "'the servant of the Empress.'

"'Would it were so in Afghanistan!' said the Afghan, 'for there we obey only our own wills.'

"'And for that reason,' said the native officer, twirling his moustache, 'your Amir whom you do not obey must come here and take orders from our Viceroy.'"

This was how it *looked*, especially in contrast with most other Asian powers at that time – a pyramid of discipline and command, with the Viceroy at the apex, the absolute ruler of 300 million people. But of course it was not really as simple as that. In practice, even if his power has no legal limits, no ruler can do just as he likes; his power is always tempered by the possibility of rebellion. The Viceroy had always to keep in mind the dangers of discontent, and ultimately of rebellion. But there was more to it than that. The first Governor-General had to build up British power, and so did his immediate successors; later, as the power at his disposal grew, a number of forces combined to limit in practice what the Governor-General could do. The whole line – they were all constitutionally Governors-General and from 1858, when the British government took over from the East India Company, were Viceroys as well – was in theory controlled by Parliament in the United Kingdom. And that control could be sharply asserted: Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General, and in many ways the most remarkable, was impeached; four – Wellesley, Ellenborough, Curzon and Wavell – were recalled; two, Northbrook and Lytton, resigned when there was a change of government in London.

The limits to the power of the first Governor-General were far greater than those his successors were to endure. When Warren Hastings, whose professional training was in buying and selling silk, was called to exercise administrative, diplomatic and military power in 1773, all was uncertainty. The East India Company, for 150 years no more than a trading company, had become an Indian power only 15 years before, when Clive's victory at Plassey laid Bengal at its feet. Now, it dealt at least as an equal with great Indian states such as Hyderabad and Oudh, each as big as France or Spain.

But no conventions for its rule had been established. In India there were three British administrative centres known as "Presidencies": Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. None had power over the other two. Could one Presidency go to war and another remain at peace?

And what was the relationship between the Company and the British government? The Company had troops of its own, but some King's troops had already been sent – the 39th Foot, later to become the Dorsets – and the Company depended heavily on the Royal Navy. To what extent could the Company act independently at all?

Even in Bengal, the Governor-General was no more than the Chairman of his Council and the Council had shown that it could be petty and obstructive. It was hardly a good position from which to tackle local problems – the greatest of which was to devise a method of governing Bengal without corruption and injustice – let alone face wider issues.

In one respect only, Warren Hastings had more power than most of those who came later; he was further in time from London. Until the mid-19th Century, when steamships came into use, a ship usually took nine months and sometimes 18 to come from London to Calcutta; no letter could receive an answer in less than a year and more often it was two. When he was sure of a majority on his Council, Hastings sometimes took advantage of this time-lag to disobey orders from London and take his own line, explaining and apologizing afterwards.

An act was passed in London in 1773 which helped a little. Warren Hastings now became the first Governor-General with a general power of supervision over the other two Presidencies. But his authority was not clearly defined and slow communications between the Presidencies encouraged an attitude of independence: the Bombay Council, for example, became involved in a war of which the Governor-General had not approved and which it was beyond their strength to win; Hastings had to extricate them.

In Bengal, his power remained questionable. The Governor-General's Council was reduced in number to the more convenient figure of five, but a majority of three could override the Governor-

General. Three new Members of Council were sent from England; one of these was Philip Francis, a bitter, clever man, arrogant and jealous, who attacked Hastings and every measure he undertook with relentless animosity. The other two followed the lead of Francis, so long as they lived, but the climate of Bengal was too much for them and both were dead within three years. For six years, Hastings endured the hostility of Francis, a feud that ended in a duel. Francis was wounded and shortly afterwards left for England. Hastings stayed on five more years.

During his 13 years of office, in spite of the incredible difficulties caused by Francis's opposition, he had come successfully through a war in which the French had done all they could to regain power in India. It was a time when politics in England was a matter of squaring the men who controlled votes – but Hastings had neither influence nor votes nor any knowledge of how things were fixed in Westminster. He survived in India because his adversaries – in his own words – "sickened, died or fled," because he alone of his Council had the ability and knowledge to get things done, because of his boundless patience and tenacity.

Hastings laid the foundations of the Empire that followed by saving it from the French. But he did much more than this: he began to purify the administration of corruption and he encouraged the Company's servants to consider the welfare of Indians. In this he began a tradition which never wholly died. He was a friend of Indian ways and Indian culture; he encouraged the study of Indian languages and Indian law. None of his successors surpassed him in administrative ability, patience or courage; none approached him in sympathy for India.

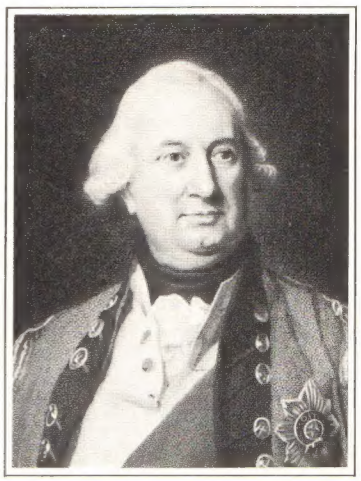
Nonetheless he was impeached – tried by Parliament for offences against the state. Of course he had made mistakes, but his accusers were moved by jealousy and ignorance and in the end he was acquitted of every charge. And even in his impeachment he was of service to India: his trial proved the essential point that the Governor-General ruled his Indian subjects not as an absolute despot but as a trustee on behalf of Parliament and ultimately on behalf of India.

Of all the Governors-General, Hastings was the only one to hold office so long, the only one to be impeached, the only one to fight a duel with a Member of his Council – and the only one to be remembered in an Indian nursery-rhyme. It is no more complimentary than "Humpty-Dumpty," but at least he was remembered. Roughly it runs:

With howdah on horse
And on elephant saddle
The great Warren Hastings
Did a skedaddle

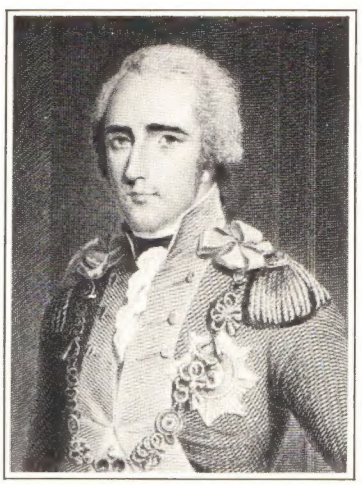
British officials display courtly pretensions in this satirical sketch of a Calcutta levée in 1792. Paunchy Lord Cornwallis (top right) presides.

Warren Hastings
(1774–85)



Lord Cornwallis
(1786–93 and 1805)

Sir John Shore
(1793–98)



Lord Wellesley
(1798–1805)

RULERS OF INDIA

For 175 years, the rulers of British India, portrayed here and overleaf, formed a dynasty as impressive as that of the Mughals before them. The fact that until 1858 they were employees of a commercial enterprise, the East India Company, and known merely as Governors-General, not Viceroys, reduced their stature not at all. They were answerable to no one in India. Moreover, bad communications isolated them from the day-to-day control of London. They were near-absolute rulers.

Power tends to corrupt, and the Governors-General were, on the face of it, eligible candidates for absolute corruption. They ruled in a land where bribery was a traditional lubricant of government. Indeed, in the 1760s, most Company officials had gone to India to become rich, and usually succeeded. In the 1780s, therefore, the Company decided in future to appoint their Governors-General from a class of man supposedly above corruption: rich and aristocratic. As one official, praising the appointment of Lord Cornwallis in 1786, said, "Here there was no broken fortune to be mended . . . no avarice to be gratified. . . ." It was the classical argument for rule by gentlemen. And in India it ensured a long, admirable tradition of honest and upright government.

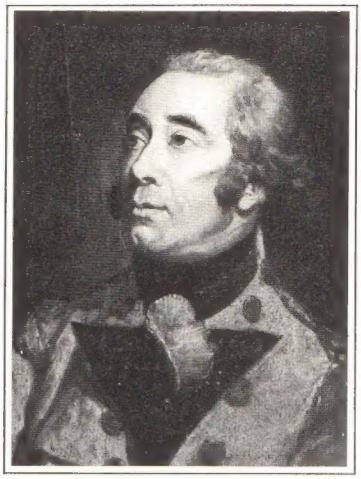
Lord Auckland
(1836–42)

Lord Ellenborough
(1842–44)

Lord (Henry) Hardinge
(1844–48)

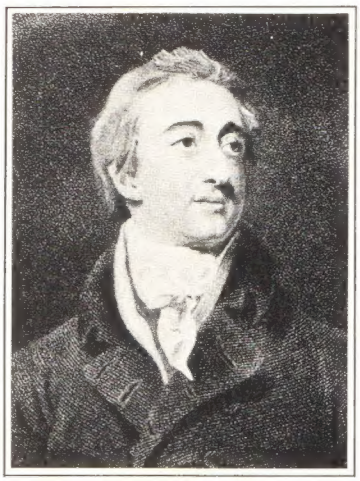
Lord Dalhousie
(1848–56)

Lord (Gilbert) Minto
(1807–13)



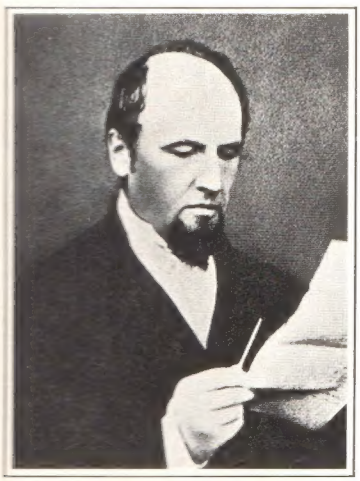
Lord (Francis) Hastings
(1813–23)

Lord Amherst
(1823–28)

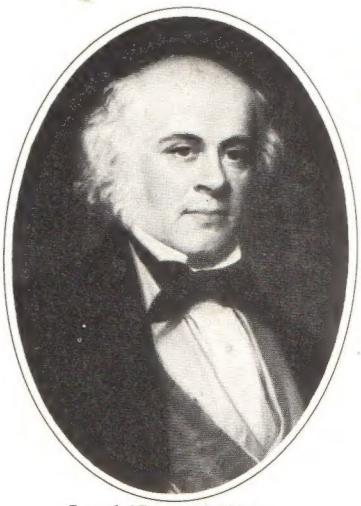


Lord Bentinck
(1828–35)

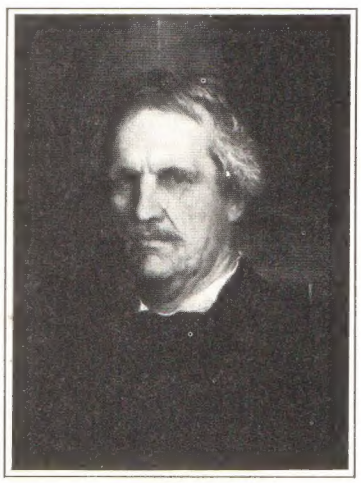
A statue of Clive, founder of British India, stands amid Whitehall buildings. The one on the left housed the India Office after 1858.



Lord Canning
(1856–62)

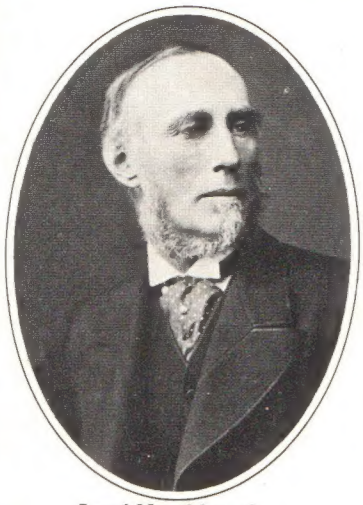


Lord (James) Elgin
(1862–63)

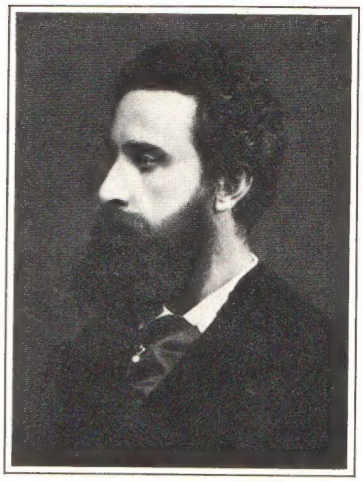


Lord Lawrence
(1864–69)

Lord Mayo
(1869–72)

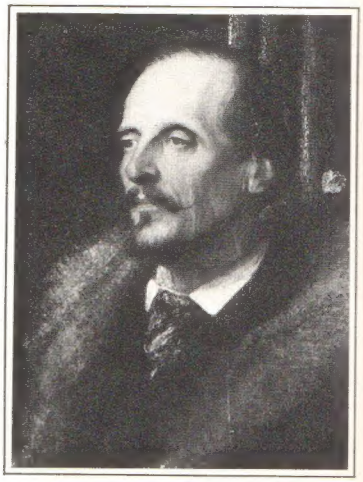


Lord Northbrook
(1872–76)



Lord Lytton
(1876–80)

Lord Ripon
(1880–84)



Lord Dufferin
(1884–88)

Pomp and Red Tape to the Last

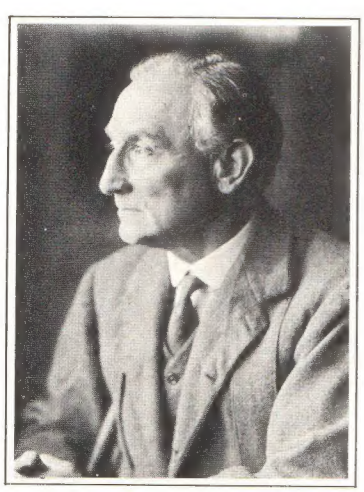
After the Indian Mutiny in 1858, the Governors-General became known as Viceroys, to mark the transfer of power from the East India Company to the Crown. They had won a new grandeur; but they lost their near-absolute power. First steamships, then the Suez Canal and finally the telegraph cable ended their isolation from London.

Though their wings were clipped, they were burdened with the same endless protocol and even more paper work. India's new rail and cable systems brought in messages and dispatch-boxes by the thousand from the provinces. Lord Dufferin suffered such "constant labour and anxiety" at his desk that four years in office, he felt, was about as much as any man could bear. The formidable Curzon complained that the vast, unwieldy administrative system moved with the "regal slowness" of an elephant's gait. Confronted once with a hundredweight of memoranda, he commented caustically: "I have perused these papers for two hours and twenty minutes. On the whole, I agree with the gentleman whose signature resembles a trombone." But his impatience accomplished nothing. When Lord Mountbatten became the last Viceroy of India in 1947, the red taped memoranda and dispatches were still accumulating.

Chandeliers in the Viceroy's palace symbolize the glory of the Raj.

Lord (Charles) Hardinge
(1910–16)

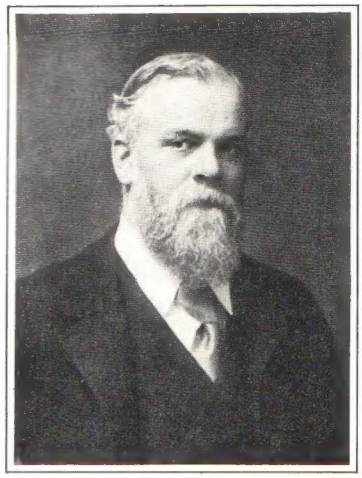
Lord Chelmsford
(1916–21)



Lord Reading
(1921–26)

Lord Irwin
(1926–31)

Lord Lansdowne
(1888–93)

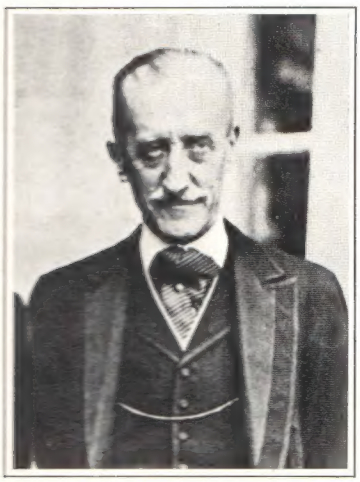


Lord (Victor) Elgin
(1894–99)

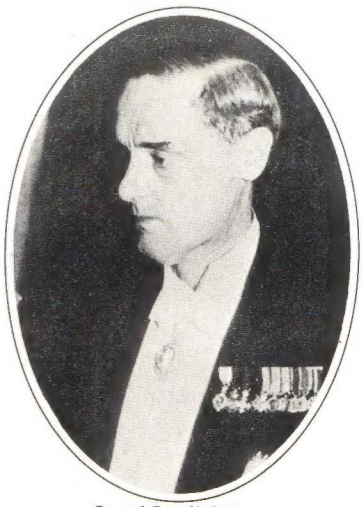
Lord Curzon
(1899–1905)

Lord (Gilbert John) Minto
(1905–10)

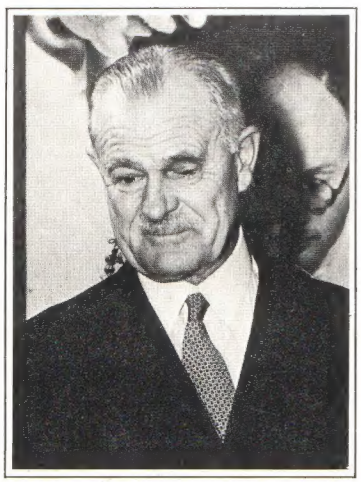
Sandstone lions guard the entrance to the Viceroy's palace in New Delhi. The city was inaugurated as the imperial capital of India in 1931.



Lord Willingdon
(1931–36)



Lord Linlithgow
(1936–42)



Lord Wavell
(1943–47)

Lord Mountbatten
(1947–48)

II. Would-be Autocrats

Warren Hastings' successor, Lord Cornwallis, was the first example of the aristocratic Governor-General – the pattern for the future. Cornwallis inherited a peerage before he came to India; he had been aide-de-camp to the King, Lord of the Bedchamber, Constable of the Tower; he had held high command in the army in America. He was one of those aristocrats who spent their life in the service of Britain throughout the 19th Century as generals, ambassadors and governors all over the world. He at first refused the appointment and only accepted it at last with "grief of heart" and after being given the power to override his Council – a power for which Hastings had asked in vain. Since he was Commander-in-Chief as well as Governor-General, Cornwallis was in a far stronger position than Hastings – much nearer to being the absolute despot that later Governors-General seemed to be. Hastings could hardly have written, as Cornwallis did by every mail, resolutely turning down recommendations for jobs sent him by great men in England – including the Prince Regent, the most importunate of all. "Here, my lord," he wrote to one of them, "we are in the habit of looking for the man for the place, and not the place for the man." He carried much further the work Hastings had begun of cleaning up the corruption which a generation before had been taken for granted both in England and in India.

Cornwallis was the first with apparently absolute power. But in some ways the very advantages he had over Hastings made him more dependent on others. He had the ear of great men in London and was listened to at Court, but he did not know the details of Indian administration and he leaned heavily on his principal adviser, Sir John Shore.

He overrode Shore's advice, however, in one vital matter of which the consequences were felt for more than a hundred years. Seeing everything in relation to the society he knew in Britain, Cornwallis hoped to create in Bengal a class of enlightened landlords who would help their tenants to improve their holdings and increase agricultural productivity, just as many great landlords had done in England. This measure was known as the "Permanent Settlement of Bengal." Fifty years later it was clear that it would have been better to protect the tenants against their landlords; Shore had been right and Cornwallis wrong – but Cornwallis had been given power, and he had used it.

In another way, too, Cornwallis set the tone for the future: his life was ruled by his work. In a letter Cornwallis wrote to his son at Eton, he gives a picture of the Governor-General's daily life. "I get on horseback just as the dawn of day begins to appear, ride on the same road and the same distance, pass the whole forenoon . . . in doing business and almost exactly the same portion of time every day at table, drive out in a phaeton little before sunset, then write or read over letters or papers on business for two hours; sit down at nine with two or three officers of my staff to some fruit and a biscuit and go to bed soon after the clock strikes ten." This was the pattern of hard work and long hours which grew steadily more and more exacting as the century wore on.

Wellesley, who became fourth Governor-General after Cornwallis's departure and the undramatic reign of Sir John Shore, unquestionably saw himself as a King in all but name. "He had cultivated," wrote one of his biographers, "all the outward graces of a great man . . . he appeared as one who had the right to attention and homage." Wellesley, like two other men in the long succession, Dalhousie in the mid-19th Century and Curzon at the turn of the century, stood out as an autocrat born for the purple, a man whose abilities would never have shone so clearly in any other position. All three were quick in decision and appear never to have had any doubts that their view of the matter alone was right. All three were hard-working and able, all three mastered the details of a case quickly,

The Nawab of Oudh, a leading Indian prince (seated second from right), entertains Lord Wellesley (on his left) at an extravagant breakfast-party, complete with elephant fight.

wrote long, vigorous and cogent minutes. All three found it hard to leave details to anyone else. Wellesley, like Curzon was convinced that the great office must be supported by a constant emphasis on pomp and ceremony; like Dalhousie, he believed passionately that British rule conferred such benefits that every opportunity of extending it should be seized.

Indeed Wellesley went further and created the opportunities. He was the most thoroughgoing expansionist of all, and had no sympathy with the more tolerant ideals of Warren Hastings, who wished to see the influence, but not the rule, of Britain extend over the whole of India. Wellesley had what were called "extended views," a vision of Empire which he was determined so far as possible to realize. He set about the task of government by collecting an inner circle of brilliant and dedicated young men, who knew him as "the glorious little man."

He was immediately successful – but he failed to perceive the limitations on his power. He had been appointed by the Directors of the East India Company and legally he was their servant. But he despised them and did not hesitate to show it. He acted without their orders and without telling them his plans, he disobeyed their direct orders, he disregarded their known wishes. Sometimes he was justified; he clearly could not wait 18 months for permission from London to act at a time when Britain was at war with Napoleon; swift action was often needed in matters affecting Indian states. But he applied the same principle to matters that were less urgent. He believed, rightly, that the civil servants of the Company were not properly trained; he decided that there should be a college at Fort William for their training. His case was a strong one – but this was a long-term plan and essentially a matter for the Directors. It was hardly tactful to set the college up and tell the Directors what he had done when it was in working order.

Again, the new Government House that Wellesley built at Calcutta "seemed to him a necessary expression of the dignity and magnificence of the great power now founded in the East. To the Directors it was an extravagance and a scandal." His relations with the Directors grew worse and worse. Twice he offered to resign and – because of the war with Napoleon and under pressure from the government – twice they reluctantly asked him to stay. His military success was his strong card. But the first military set-back was enough; Lord Cornwallis, who in the meantime had been Viceroy of Ireland, was a second time appointed to the Viceroyalty of India. He was to succeed Wellesley with instructions to undo much of his work and Wellesley was recalled. He had made the great mistake

A lion and two sphinxes carved in teak surmount one of the four imposing gateways to Government House, Calcutta, the "court" of British India.

of thinking that he really was all-powerful.

It was not only control from London that set bounds to the power of the Governor-General. A French traveller in India in the 1830s, Victor Jacquemont, remarked that at one station in Bengal there were eight Englishmen, whose salaries, if the place had been French, would have been divided between a hundred Frenchmen. He thought that to govern through a few highly paid officials was much better than to govern through a larger number who were paid worse. However that may be – and there is much to be said for Jacquemont's view – it had one important consequence for the Governor-General. He could never quite forget the question of numbers. British soldiers in India were usually in the proportion of about one to 6,000 of the population; British officials of the Indian Civil Service were usually about one in 300,000. Every Englishman in India was dependent on a large number of Indians; even the British private soldier could not exist without Indian cooks, water-carriers, drivers and so on, and in both infantry and cavalry there were usually three or four Indian soldiers for every one British. Even in the 1857–58 Mutiny, there were twice as many Indian soldiers as British in the victorious force that took Delhi and decided that the Empire would continue. And the civil administration was carried on in each district with a staff almost entirely Indian.

All this meant that the government for most of the time had usually to operate in ways the people did not strongly oppose. True, powerful, united opposition was never a possibility for most of the 19th Century. Until towards the end of the century, there was hardly any feeling of Indian nationalism. But there was regional sentiment, strong religious feeling, a dislike of foreign culture, and if a proposed measure was known to be offensive to Hindus or Muslims, to Sikhs or Marathas, it was unlikely that it would go through. The Governor-General and his Council were not legally *responsible* to the people of India, but they were to some extent *responsive* to what they thought were their wishes, particularly in matters of religion or social custom.

There is another story of Kipling's which, though it is fiction, illustrates both the Council's frequent ignorance of how a peasant might look at what they were doing and the desire to do what was in the peasants' interest.

In the story, the government were planning an act to protect tenants of land in a certain region; the act was almost ready for approval. At a dinner-party in a private house in Simla, the Law Member of Council mentioned the measure to a colleague. He was overheard by a small boy of six, who had got out of bed when he heard the noise of the dinner-party and had been allowed to sit on his father's knee for a few minutes before going back. Now this little boy, as was often the way with Victorian small boys in India, spoke Urdu more easily than English and heard a great deal discussed by servants and messengers. He was able to tell the Law Member that his friends in the bazaar thought the proposal was wrong, because it would give them only five years' tenure of the land and they needed more. The Law Member made inquiries, found that this really was the view among the kind of people who were affected and the change was made.

Much earlier than this, a succession of Governors, including the great Wellesley and Lord Hastings (not Warren Hastings but a later successor of Wellesley's), had reluctantly postponed the abolition of suttee – the sacrifice of widows with their husbands – because they did not think public opinion was ready for it. Lord William Bentinck, who was Governor-General from 1828 to 1835, was regarded among men of his own aristocratic class as having very advanced views; he was a disciple of Jeremy Bentham, whose philosophy of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" was responsible for so many reforms in the English legal system. Bentinck applied Bentham's principles to Indian affairs with tact and moderation; he had the courage to make suttee illegal – in which he had the support of most enlightened Indians – without the reactions that many had feared; he abolished flogging in the Indian Army – 40 years before it was abolished for British soldiers – and he played an important part in the spread of education in English. But though a dedicated reformer, he was conscious always of the limitations on his powers and he wisely leaned on the advice of Sir Charles Metcalfe, his principal adviser and one of the ablest Englishmen ever to go to India.

Metcalfe ought to have succeeded him, and indeed he was recommended by the Directors for the post and acted as Governor-General for a year. But a Tory government refused to confirm him on the general ground that an aristocrat from Britain was preferable. George Eden, Lord Auckland, was selected but before he arrived Metcalfe fell from the Directors' favour because, in his year as Acting Governor-General, he established a free Press in India. Bentinck and he had been in agreement on this but the Directors felt he had slighted them and soon afterwards passed him over for the appointment of Governor of Madras. He left India to be Governor of Jamaica and Governor-General of Canada, another example of a man who over-estimated his freedom to act independently.

Auckland took office in March, 1836. He had before him, in the story of Metcalfe's fate, clear evidence that the Governor-General was not the absolute monarch that he appeared and he did not underestimate his dependence on London. But, in spite of industry, ability and kindliness, he must be reckoned the worst Governor-General in the whole succession. Perhaps, in other circumstances, he might have passed without so sweeping a judgment; he was unfortunate in his advisers and he was faced with a crisis in Afghanistan, the story of which is told elsewhere in this history, in the chapter entitled *The North-West Frontier*. But crises in Afghanistan recurred throughout the century and Lord Auckland cannot be acquitted of responsibility for the way he dealt with this one.

He saw a clear choice between two courses – non-intervention and intervention. He chose the latter making things worse by a bad political alliance. Auckland's two predecessors, William Bentinck and the Acting Governor-General Charles Metcalfe, had agreed that it was in Britain's interest that Afghanistan should be strong – or at least stable and united. They had welcomed the accession of Dost Muhammad, who had

come to power as the strongest of the Afghan chiefs and had deposed the weak and unpopular Shah Shuja, but they had kept aloof from Afghan affairs.

There arose in Auckland's time one of the periodic scares about Russian influence and at the same time a Persian army besieged Herat, the western outpost of Afghanistan. Dost Muhammad wanted help – but put forward impossible conditions for accepting it. It is hard to believe that a skilled diplomat could not have induced him to accept help on more favourable terms, but Auckland preferred to dethrone him and restore Shah Shuja. History teems with examples of the unwisdom of trying to force an unpopular exiled King on a proud people; in this case, Auckland's plan involved the additional folly of trying to get the work done for him by Ranjit Singh, the Sikh ruler of the strong independent state of the Punjab. But Ranjit Singh was a shrewd and experienced statesman and far too sensible to send his troops into the wild mountains of Afghanistan in order to carry out British policy. He must have enjoyed his own skill in edging Auckland into undertaking the adventure alone. The resulting disaster of the First Afghan War was complete: a British army was destroyed, Dost Muhammad was restored to the throne. The Company's reputation as invincible received a blow from which it never recovered.

Auckland had over-estimated his own skill and power; he had thought that at least within Asia he could do as he liked. But perhaps he felt secretly that his office was too great for him; he was unmarried and was accompanied by his two unmarried sisters, one of whom, Emily, has left a most readable record of their daily life. She tells us that he complained again and again that he was bored. There was a famine in India, men and women were dying by thousands, and this fantastic adventure to Afghanistan was on his hands; he was ruler of an empire vaster than Alexander the Great's – and he was bored! Perhaps it was the nearest he could come to saying it was too much for him. But his immediate predecessor, Metcalfe, would have known what to do.

"Tom Raw" (centre) makes a fool of himself at a Government House ball. Tom, the "aukward" East India Company cadet, was invented in 1828 by a ballad-writing Company official, Sir Charles D'Oyly, as an instrument for poking fun at the over-coiffured official society of Calcutta.

continued on p. 1498

"Up the Country" with the Edens

"'Home is home, be it ever so homely,'" sighed Emily Eden, sister and companion to the Governor-General, Lord Auckland, as she returned to Calcutta in 1839. Her brother shared her relief: for 18 months, they and a massive retinue of servants had made a round trip of 2,000 miles from Calcutta, north-west to Simla and back. The purpose of the journey was to secure the support of the Sikh leader, Ranjit Singh, as part of British efforts to control India's North-West Frontier. But politics took second place for Miss Eden, whose letters to her elder sister Eleanor in England, later published as *Up the Country*, record day-to-day life with her mild and ineffectual brother.

Oct. 21, 1837. We are now fairly off for 18 months of travelling by steamer, tents and mountains. . . . At the ghaut [landing stage], a large set of our particular acquaintances were waiting for us. . . . G. [George, Lord Auckland] made his progress on foot. . . . He is not so shy as he used to be at these ceremonies, though I think a long walk through troops presenting arms is trying to everybody. . . . The guns fired, the gentlemen waved their hats and so we left Calcutta.

Patna, Nov. 7. G. went to see the jail and the opium godowns, which he said were very curious. There is opium to the value of 1,500,000*l.* in their storehouses, and Mr. T. says that they wash every workman who comes out; because the little boys even, who are employed in making it up, will contrive to roll about in it, and that the washing of a little boy well rolled in opium is worth four annas (or sixpence) in the bazaar, if he can escape to it.

Ghazeepore, Nov. 12. There were two women on the landing-place with a petition. They were Hindu ladies, and were carried down in covered palanquins, and very enveloped in veils. They flung themselves on the ground, and laid hold of G., and screamed and sobbed in a horrid way, but without showing their faces, and absolutely howled at last, before they could be carried off. They wanted a pardon for the husband of one of them, who, with his followers, is said to have murdered about half a village full of Mussulmans.

Nov. 14. We did not get home last night till half-past one, and were up at seven to go on board, and we had to go smirking and smiling through all that regiment again, with all the other gentlemen to go to the boat with us; but we may have a rest to-day. It is a hard – country life, is it not? . . . I constantly long to be in an open carriage with four post-horses, alone with G., and that we might drive through a pretty country, and arrive at an inn where nobody could dine with us or ask us to a ball.

Benares, Nov. 15. We landed at five, and drove four miles through immense crowds and much dust to our camp. The first evening of tents, I must say, was more uncomfortable than I had ever fancied. Everybody kept saying 'What a magnificent camp!' and I thought I never had seen such squalid, melancholy discomfort. . . .

Mohun Ke Serai, Nov. 23. We made our first march. The bugle sounds at half-past five to wake us, though the camels perform that ceremony rather earlier, and we set off at six as the clock strikes, for as nobody is allowed to precede the Governor-General, it would be hard upon the camp if we were inexact. The comfort of that rule is inexpressible, as we escape all dust that way.

Camp near Allahabad, Nov. 30. G. and I went on an elephant through rather a pretty village in the evening, and he was less bored than usual, but I never saw him hate anything so much as he does this camp life. I have long named my tent 'Misery Hall.' F. [Emily's younger sister, Fanny] said it was very odd, as everybody observed her tent was like a fairy palace.

'Mine is not exactly that,' G. said; 'indeed I call it Foully Palace, it is so very squalid looking.' He was sitting in my tent in the evening, and when the purdahs are all down, all the outlets to the tents are so alike that he could not find which crevice led to his abode; and he said at last, 'Well it is a hard case; they talk of the luxury in which the Governor-General travels, but I cannot even find a covered passage from Misery Hall to Foully Palace.'

Futtehpore, Dec. 16. The Prince of Orange arrived at two yesterday. He is a fair, quiet-looking boy, and is very shy and very silent. He did not seem the least tired with ten days and nights of palanquin. We sent the carriage to meet him some miles off, with some luncheon. G. pressed him to try a warm bath, and five minutes after, saw his own cherished green tub carried over. 'I really can't stand that,' he said. 'If he keeps my tub, there must be war with Holland immediately. I shall take Batavia.'

Cawnpore, New Year's Day, 1838. The dust at Cawnpore has been quite dreadful the last two days. It is here,

too, that we first came into the starving districts. They have had no rain for a year and a half; the cattle all died, and the people are all dying or gone away . . . the distress is perfectly dreadful. You cannot conceive the horrible sights we see, particularly children; perfect skeletons in many cases, their bones through their skin, without a rag of clothing, and utterly unlike human creatures. . . . G. and I walked down to the stables this morning before breakfast, and found such a miserable little baby, something like an old monkey, but with glazed, stupid eyes, under the care of another little wretch of six years old. I am sure you would have sobbed to see the way in which the little atom flew at a cup of milk . . . and the way in which the little brother fed it. . . . Dr. D. says it cannot live, it is so diseased with starvation, but I mean to try what can be done for it.

Raepone, March 30. G. held a sort of durbar today, in which he gave the soubadars (or native officers) of the regiment which escorted us, shawls and matchlocks, the same to the cavalry, and to the native officers of our body guard. . . . They have all conducted themselves most irreproachably during this long march, and they are a class of men who ought to be encouraged. There were about thirty of them in all; and at the end, after praising them and their respective colonels, he poured attar on their hands and gave them paun, which they look upon as the greatest distinction. They were extremely pleased, and all our servants were quite delighted, and said that 'our lordship was the first that had ever been so good to the natives.'

Simla, May 7. The Sikh deputation came today. . . . It is not like a common durbar for tributaries, who are dismissed in five minutes, but this lasted an hour. G. in a gilt chair in the centre, the six Sikh chiefs and Mr. B. at the right hand, and all the envoys, forty of them, in full dress and solemn silence, in a circle all round the room, and in the folding-doors between the two rooms a beautiful group of twelve Sikhs, who had no claim to chairs, but sat on the floor. And before this circle G. has to talk and to listen to the most flowery nonsense imaginable, to hear it translated and retranslated, and to vary it to each individual. It took a quarter of an hour to satisfy him about the maharajah's health, and to ascertain that the roses had bloomed in the garden of friendship, and the nightingales had sung in the bowers of affection sweeter than ever since the two powers had approached each other. Then he hoped that the deputation had not suffered from the rain; and they said that the canopy of friendship had interposed such a thick cloud that their tents had remained quite dry, which was touching, only it did so happen that the tents were so entirely soaked through that Runjeet Singh had been obliged to hire the only empty house in Simla for them.

May 11. There were some hill rajahs introduced, rather interesting. One was the brother of an ex-rajah, whose eyes had been put out by the neighbour who took his territories. Another had been dethroned by Goulâb Singh, who is one of the most powerful chiefs, except Runjeet, and a horrid character. Half his subjects are deprived of their noses and ears. This poor dethroned man, after a little formal talk, suddenly snatched off his turban and flung it at George's feet, and then threw himself on the ground, begging for assistance to get back his dominions. He cried like a child, and they say his story is a most melancholy one, but the Company are bound not to interfere.

Amritsar, Dec. 10. They [the Sikhs] are very civil to our people, and told them that the Maharajah had proclaimed he would put to death anybody who maltreated any of the Governor-General's followers; or, as they expressed it, that 'he would cut open their stomachs' – very unpleasant, for a mere little incivility. . . . He [Ranjit Singh] asked some very amusing questions of G., which I believe C. softened in the translation. If he had a wife? and when satisfied about that, How many children he had? Then he asked why he had no wife? G. said that only one was allowed in England, and if she turned out a bad one, he could not easily get rid of her. Runjeet said that was a bad custom; that the Sikhs were allowed twenty-five wives, and they did not dare to be bad, because he could beat them if they were. G. replied that was an excellent custom, and he would try to introduce it when he got home. . . .

Simla, Sept 27, 1839. It appears that our last letters will again be too late for the steamer. G. always keeps the express till it is a day too late for the steamer. In fact, if he has a fault (I don't think he has, but if he has), it is a slight disposition to trifle with the English letters, just on the same principle as he always used to arrive half an hour too late for dinner at Longleat and Bowood. He will never allow for the chance of being too late, and now, for two months running, his despatches have been left at Bombay.

Thanjou, Nov. 9. I have a right to feel vapid and tired and willing to lie down and rest; for during the last four years my life has been essentially an artificial life, and, moreover, from my bad health it is physically fatiguing, and I feel I am flagging much more than I ever expected to do. I should like to see you and to be at home again; but I have no wish to begin a fresh course of life, not from any quarrel with it, for I know nobody who is in fact more spoiled, as far as worldly prosperity goes. I never wish for a thing here, that I cannot have, and G., who has always been a sort of idol to me, is, I really think, fonder of me than ever, and more dependent on me, as I am his only confidant. I feel I am of use to him, and that I am in my right place when I am by his side. Moreover, his government here has hitherto been singularly prosperous and his health very good, so that there is nothing outward to find fault with, and much to be thankful for. Still, I have had enough of it, and as people say in ships, there is difficulty in 'carrying on.'

Calcutta, March 13. We arrived at Calcutta late in the evening of Sunday, 1st March. . . . 'Well! home is home, be it ever so homely.' So say I on coming back to this grand palace, from those wretched tents, and so I shall repeat with still greater unction when we arrive at our dear little villa at Kensington Gore. 99

The next major disaster in British India was the Mutiny of 1857–58, described in detail on pages 617–44 of this history. It was sparked off in part by the driving modernization of Lord Dalhousie, Governor-General from 1848 to 1856. Dalhousie, masterful, utterly self-confident, explored to the limits his independence of action, and by doing so revealed the paradoxes inherent in Company rule and prepared the way for its end. In the short term, the changes he initiated may be seen as causes of the Mutiny; in the long run, they laid the foundations of Indian nationalism and present-day India.

Dalhousie came to India when only 35 as the youngest Governor-General since Warren Hastings; his achievement in eight years was staggering but he returned home an invalid, prematurely aged by his own unsparing hard work. He was – to all outward judgment – successful in all he did; he inspired the loyalty, respect and affection of the men who worked with him. Masterful though he was, he avoided conflict with the Directors. Yet there is something cold and rational about his policies and a deep underestimation of the irrational preference that human beings cherish for ways they know and understand.

He had a vision of a modern India, a vast country united by roads, railways, telegraphs and posts, with a widespread system of education, flourishing industries and a progressive administration. He looked with great distaste on the many principalities in which Indian princes ruled with the support of British power. He believed, with justice in most cases, that they were backward and often misgoverned. This was almost inevitable under a system which made a ruler safe but irresponsible; a prince who could neither be attacked by his neighbours nor expelled by his subjects had little incentive to achieve anything but enjoyment. He believed fervently in the policy "of taking advantage of every just opportunity which presents itself . . . for extending our system of government to those whose best interests, we sincerely believe, will be promoted."

In pursuit of his vision, Dalhousie annexed two large states formerly beyond Company influence, the Punjab and Lower Burma; two large territories with which the Company already had some relations, the Kingdom of Oudh and the state of Nagpur, which were about the size of France and Italy respectively; and half a dozen lesser principalities.

Dalhousie applied ruthlessly the principle that if there was no direct heir to a Prince, an adopted son could not inherit the throne. This was contrary to established Hindu law, by which an adopted son is equal in every way to a natural son. The British did not interfere with this in respect of personal property but refused to let it apply to rule over a dependent state.

At the same time, Dalhousie vigorously supported those administrators, eager to modernize, who regarded as out of date the position of hundreds of semi-feudal landlords who, all over India, had seemed to their tenants, and to themselves, a fixed institution – sometimes bad, sometimes good, but always *there*, a presence. To some of the eager young Englishmen whom Dalhousie encouraged, "to oust a landholder was as good a deed as to shoot a tiger." They demanded title-deeds and evicted those who could not show them. A hundred years later, when Independence came, the Congress Party thought on much the same lines. But in the middle of the 19th Century, this progressive attitude seemed to many Indians a threat to property; it made many enemies and filled all with unease.

The annexation of Oudh was the culminating blow; it left every remaining prince uneasy, even every petty squire. It was the supreme example of lack of understanding between ruler and ruled. There was no question that Oudh had for at least half a century been grossly misgoverned. One Governor-General after another had warned the King of Oudh that he must mend his ways or be deposed. Dalhousie's view was that "the British Government would be guilty in the sight of God and man if it were any longer to aid in sustaining by its countenance an administration fraught with suffering to millions." But one member of his Council recorded his contrary opinion, remarking that "the natives of India in one respect resemble all the rest of mankind. They

A Queen-Empress

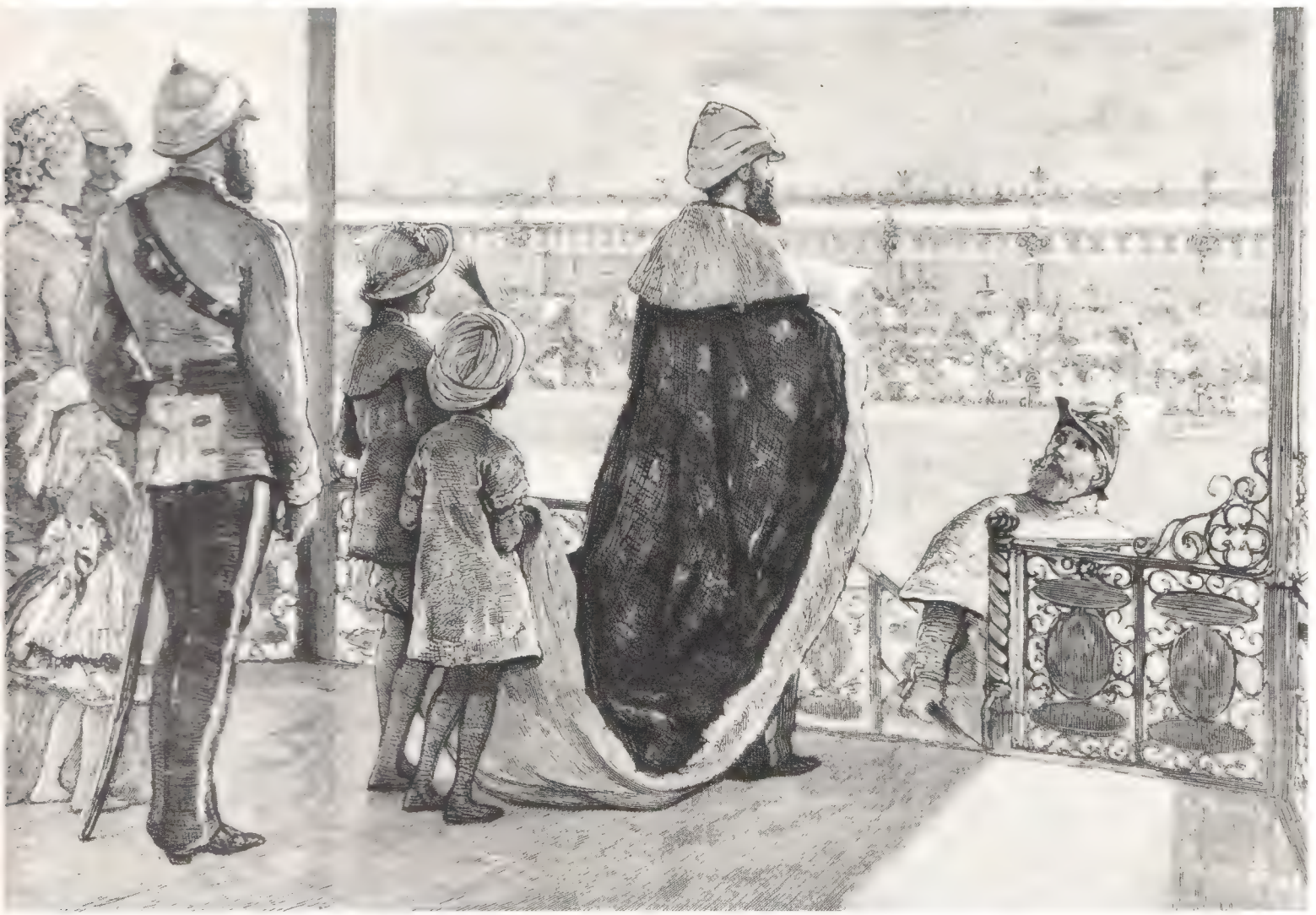
"I am an Empress," declared Queen Victoria in 1873, "and in common conversation am sometimes called Empress of India. Why have I never officially assumed this title?" The answer was that, most statesmen felt it sounded comically grandiose. But it soon found favour with two influential men, the Prime Minister, Disraeli, whose great weakness was indulgence of his "Faery Queen," and Lord Lytton, the Viceroy, described by one historian of India as "plus royaliste que le roi." Both men, anxious about Russian encroachment on India, believed an Empress would better win the allegiance of the Indian princes.

Having received grudging Parliamentary approval for the new title, Victoria became Empress of India on January 1, 1877. London took little notice. The big occasion was reserved for Delhi where, to dazzle the princes, Lytton staged a durbar of almost absurd magnificence. Trumpets sounded, guns boomed, and the imperial tidings were read out in English and Urdu. The Queen was now officially Empress.

Lytton poses for a Proclamation portrait.

Medals commemorating the 1877 Proclamation bear inscriptions in Persian – the court language of the Mughals – and English and Hindustani.

England sinks under the weight of Indian imperial trappings in a *Punch* cartoon of Victoria, Lytton (left) and Disraeli (right).



Major Barnes (right), said to have had the Army's loudest voice, takes his cue from Lytton before bellowing the Proclamation to the durbar guests.

prefer their own customs to those of other people." And all over India the annexation of Oudh was regarded as unjust, because, however iniquitous and corrupt his administration, the King had been for 70 years a faithful ally of the British.

Unity and efficiency were Dalhousie's aims; he would make of India one nation, uniting many tribes, sects and castes. His educational schemes bore fruit in a network of schools and in three universities instituted in the very year of the Mutiny. Roads, railways, telegraphs, bridges, and a halfpenny post would reduce the distances; imperceptibly these influences would modify those aspects of Indian society which he and his contemporaries regarded as deplorably backward. He was the leader of the school among British administrators known to themselves as "the progressives" and to their opponents as "the levellers." They looked with horror at the feudal elements in land tenure, at the institution of caste, at the position of women; they regarded Hinduism as idolatry and superstition.

Half a century later, there was an Indian middle class educated in Western ways. There were by that time strong elements in Indian public opinion who, still accepting Hindu philosophy and the essence of Hindu religion, wished to change the Hindu social system even more radically than Dalhousie. But in the 1850s, Indian reformers were few. On the other hand, many Indian leaders felt that their interests were directly threatened and many more that their religion was being attacked. Indeed, they were right: education in Western thought *was* a threat to the supremacy of the Brahmins; the whole idea of a society divinely sanctioned and divided into rigid compartments was in danger.

A bill permitting the remarriage of Hindu widows was regarded as a threat to religion; another was a measure permitting a son to inherit his father's possessions even if he had changed his religion. This, it was felt, could only be designed to encourage conversion to Christianity. The whole tone of British rule in the forties and fifties of the last century was in the direction of progress, equality, unity, the breaking down of barriers; it laid the foundations of nationalism, yet it produced, in an ancient society, such a fear of change that its immediate result was widespread rebellion and the terror of the Indian Mutiny.

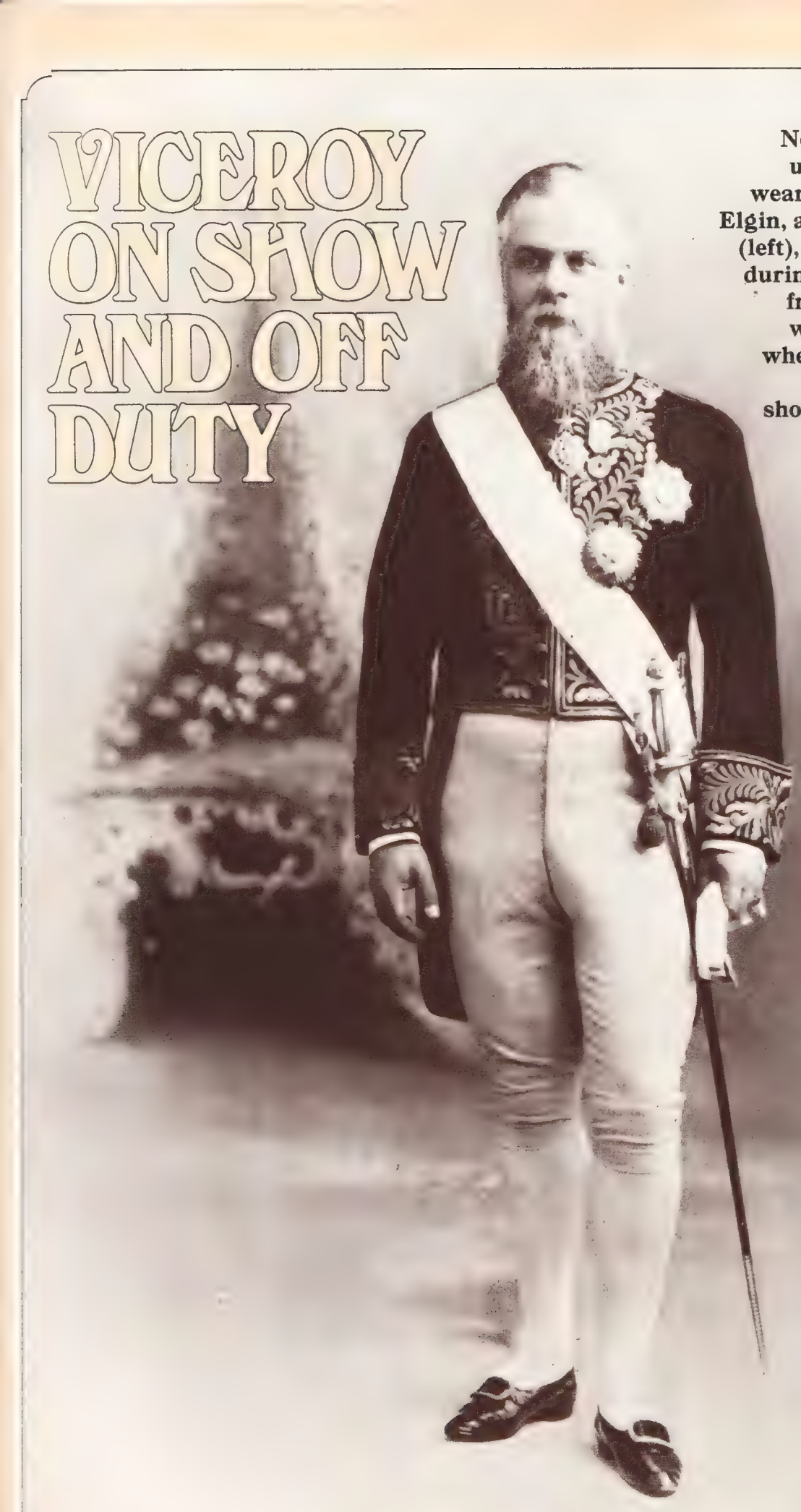
Dalhousie's methods had yet another lasting influence. Seeing India as a whole, Dalhousie shifted the centre of power away from Calcutta. He rid himself of direct responsibility for Bengal, moved troops to the North-West, and himself spent much time either in Simla or on tour. This became the pattern for his successors and affected the method of work by which India was governed.

Simla lies sprawled along four main ridges, which meet in a central peak; there is very little level ground, the paths are narrow, and although the population is tiny compared with any great capital city, the distances are considerable. Even in the 1930s, motor cars were not permitted. Officials lived in isolated bungalows and much work was done at home, in isolation. This was due in part to the very small number of British officers and their dependence on excellent Indian clerks. Since in India it is the husband who does the family shopping, office hours began late, when the daily shopping was done, and this, as well as the geography of Simla, made for work in isolation, by notes, out of office hours. It was a system that imposed increasing limitations on the Governor-General's ability to make decisions independently of his advisers.

A letter from, let us say, the government of Madras – unless it was of blinding urgency or of some specially confidential nature – would first be dealt with by the clerks, who would look up previous correspondence, and send it up to an Under-Secretary – a junior officer of the Indian Civil Service – with a note guiding him to all he needed in order to master the subject. He would form an opinion and, might deal with it himself; but, if he thought it too important, he would send it on to his superior with a suggestion for action. If it reached the Member of Council responsible, all other departments concerned would have been consulted and the whole case summed up in a note by the Secretary, with a clear-cut proposal. If it went to the Viceroy, he need, in nine cases out of ten, merely add his initial. In the tenth case, he would probably discuss it with the Member concerned and perhaps take it in Council. But although at each stage in its ascent the case was summarized in a self-contained note, it reached the Viceroy with all the precedents and references, labelled with tags to help him to find them in case he wished. The physical bulk of each case was therefore considerable and the number which converged on the Viceroy every day was formidable. Every senior officer took work home and all over Simla office messengers toiled, carrying boxes of files, locked for secrecy; from office to Secretary's bungalow and back next morning; from Secretary to Member; from Member to Viceroy. "Government by despatch-box, tempered by loss of the keys," was one summary of the system.

By the middle of the century, the Governors-General had begun to have their independence of London curtailed by developments in communications. By then steamships were in use and the overseas route to India was in full operation. Passengers and mails went by steamship to Alexandria and then up the Nile to Cairo and across the desert to Suez in closed vans, very bumpy and uncomfortable; at Suez they embarked in a new ship and might be in Calcutta within about two months of leaving London. The time for the journey was halved again when the Suez Canal was opened in 1869. In 1870, the Red Sea submarine cable brought the Viceroy so close to London that he could no longer ignore even temporarily the views of the government in Britain. Parliament periodically reviewed Indian affairs, always reducing a little the independence of the Indian government and asserting a little more clearly their own control. But legal control would have been no use without physical means of asserting Parliament's will, and the physical steps followed the legal; step by step, distance was reduced and control became more of a reality ❧

VICEROY ON SHOW AND OFF DUTY



Not all Viceroys were fond of uniform, though they had to wear it almost constantly. Lord Elgin, a modest, unassuming man (left), detested official dress and, during his five years as Viceroy, from 1894 to 1899, retreated with relief into plain clothes whenever the chance arose. As the following illustrations show, a Viceroy lived two very different lives at once: one public and one private.

Lord and Lady Elgin inspect the stockade of the Maharajah of Mysore in central India. The Viceroy's own 146-head elephant herd had dwindled since the introduction of the railways in the 1850s, and Lord Elgin abolished it altogether in 1895.

The Grind and Grandeur of High Office

The most challenging office on earth was how Lord Curzon described the Viceroy's job. On top of the long hours at their desk, the men who reached this pinnacle were expected to fulfil an appallingly crowded calendar of public appearances.

The oriental concept of face demanded it. The British must match or even surpass the magnificence of the wealthy Indian princes. The social pretensions of the Anglo-Indian community, anxious to be reassured of their importance, demanded it.

And so there were endless, often boring dinner-parties and durbar after durbar, dazzling receptions at which compliments and gifts were exchanged with the exhausting solemnity of Eastern etiquette.

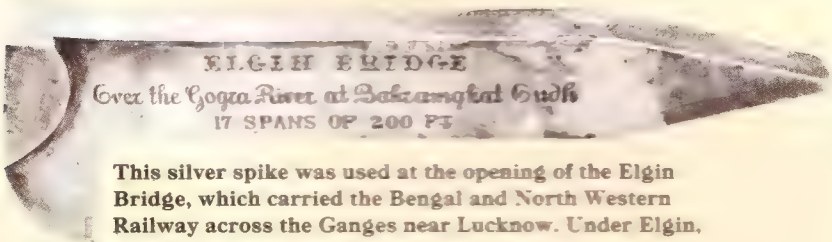
Then there were grand tours of remote areas, on which the Viceroy's wife was always expected to be present. Lady Elgin, never very strong and already burdened with an enormous family (her tenth child was born in India), found them a heavy strain, and her health caused her husband constant anxiety. Nonetheless, wherever they were, at a distant maharajah's palace, on a tiger-shoot or in a procession, the viceregal couple had to be constantly on show.

From the greyness of Victorian England, satirists poked fun at these spectacles. But far from revelling in the grandeur, Lord Elgin would have heartily echoed Lord Dalhousie who dreamed of "collapsing into privacy" at last.

Lord and Lady Elgin are photographed at the Vishnapud Temple in Gaya, a north-eastern holy city where a sacred stone is said to bear the footprint of the Hindu god, Vishnu.

Local princes stage a lavish durbar in Quetta, near the Afghan border, to honour the arrival of Lord and Lady Elgin.

Personal diaries record details of the strenuous tours made by Lord and Lady Elgin in the autumn of 1894, 1895 and 1896.



This silver spike was used at the opening of the Elgin Bridge, which carried the Bengal and North Western Railway across the Ganges near Lucknow. Under Elgin, 3,000 miles were added to India's railways.

Normal at Last!

When Lord and Lady Elgin were filling their photograph album of India, they wrote under one of the scenes (on board ship, far right) the words, "Normal at last!" It was a state of existence often longed for but rarely realized.

Still, they used their brief hours of privacy to create some semblance of their normal family life in Dunfermline, Scotland. It was a life of plain clothes and children's pets, picnics and theatricals.

Inside the Viceregal Lodge at Simla, Lord Elgin ingeniously fostered a traditional Scottish sport. Despite the lack of ice, he managed to get regular games of curling, played with large rounded stones, on the ballroom floor which native labour had uncomprehendingly polished to the highest possible sheen.

Aside from tree-felling, Lord Elgin's greatest love was walking – much to the consternation of his native guards who, following a respectful distance behind in the undergrowth, were still impelled to keep their ruler clearly in view.

Veronica, a younger, rather withdrawn daughter of Lord Elgin, never married. She preferred long walks with her father to the more gregarious Anglo-Indian amusements.

At breakfast with his wife, Lord Elgin tempts a lovebird to sip his tea. Many viceroys boasted a menagerie of exotic pets, such as Bombay goats, lemurs and gazelles.

Lord and Lady Elgin (top right) enjoy a leisurely picnic with Veronica (top left) in the Baghi Forest near Simla. There was rarely a shortage of unattached men.

Even relaxing aboard the *Warren Hastings*, Lord Elgin (left) suffered the tyranny of the dispatch-box. His wife and daughters, though, could amuse themselves with dominoes and cards.

Lord Elgin's eldest daughter, Elizabeth, (second from left) plays in private theatricals at the Viceregal Lodge (the programme is on the right). Also on stage is her father's private secretary, Mr. (later Sir) Henry Babington Smith (right), whom she married in Simla in 1897.

Elgin relaxes with his pet hunting-dogs, a pastime he much preferred to the hunt itself. Never a good horseman, he is said to have once snapped at his A.D.C.: "Hold your tongue, young man: can't you see I'm riding?"

III. Ceremonial Glitter

Four months after the end of the Indian Mutiny in 1858, Lord Canning decorates one of the princes who had remained loyal to the Crown throughout the terror.

Throughout the 19th Century, the need for Viceroys to fulfil a ritualistic, ceremonial function took up more and more time. It was therefore increasingly difficult for him to give detailed personal attention to the cases that came before him. He therefore had to rely more on his advisers. The pomp and ritual of office were thus a limitation on his personal power. Yet they felt to be necessary. In 1835, Charles Metcalfe had been passed over because the government thought someone aristocratic from Britain would better be able to play this role. Indeed, since Warren Hastings, there had been only one Governor-General who had been trained out in India and spent his life in the Company's service. This was Sir John Shore, who was not a brilliant leader. He was able, conscientious, impressed with the responsibilities of his high office – but how different from his successor, Wellesley! The British in Calcutta preferred the pomp and splendour of the "glorious little man;" they felt it somewhat derogatory to their own dignity to be ruled by a man of simple tastes and pious convictions, a Victorian before his time, a man of middle-class origin. Nor did they care for Sir George Barlow, who officiated later as Governor-General, a man whose "cold and repellant manners" are mentioned by several of his contemporaries. Thus the feeling grew up that the Governor-General had an ornamental function to perform; after the Mutiny, this became more important still, because the Governor-General was also the Viceroy, the representative of the Queen.

He had to preside at dinners and luncheons, at balls and receptions. He was sometimes referred to as "The Great Ornamental," with the implication that it was the Indian Civil Service who ran the country, with the Viceroy as a decorative figurehead.

An irreverent article in *Vanity Fair* hints at this: "I never tire of looking at a Viceroy. . . . He who is the axis of India, the centre round which the Empire rotates, is necessarily screened from all knowledge of India. He lisps no syllable of any Indian tongue; no race or caste or mode of Indian life is known to him." The Viceroy personifies charm, "diffusing as he passes the fragrance of smile and pleasantry and cigarette" – they would be Turkish cigarettes – and he brings a background of "salutes of cannon, galloping escorts, processions of landaus, beautiful teams of English horses, trains of private saloon carriages" and "cauldrons seething with champagne."

It was at Lord Dufferin that this was aimed, though several of the Viceroys had something of this look. But to think that the Viceroy was the Great Ornamental was to be even further wrong than to regard him as gifted with absolute power. He had to perform these decorative functions, and they must have made sad inroads on his time, but he was none the less the head of the pyramid. All matters of importance dealt with by the central government came to him for approval but as a rule he had discussed them at an earlier stage. He saw the Members of Council and Secretaries to government at regular intervals to talk over their work and it was at these interviews that some of those Viceroys who appeared least masterful and most ornamental made their influence felt. Arguably this method was more effective than the long dictatorial minutes recorded for posterity by Wellesley and Curzon.

After the Mutiny, four Viceroys in succession – Lawrence, Mayo, Northbrook and Lytton – found their talents challenged in particular by the problem of the North-West Frontier. The first two were able to operate successfully within the limits imposed by their position, largely because the parties in Britain did not differ in principle. But the policies of the parties diverged increasingly and changes in government in England forced the second two to resign.

Sir John Lawrence, who resolutely refused to perform the ornamental functions of Viceroy, was an excellent administrator, in the same tradition as Dalhousie. Blunt, truthful, honest, as exacting to his subordinates as to himself, but a loyal supporter of those who accepted his own gospel of unremitting work, he was a commanding rather than an endearing figure.

In foreign policy, Lawrence had always been a "close frontier" man, believing that to entangle ourselves in Afghanistan would be likely to prove as calamitous as it had been in Auckland's time. As to the Russians, he agreed with much military opinion that, if they should ever attack India, it would be far better to let them first waste their strength on the difficult advance through the mountains. Let the Russians, not the British, operate a long line of communications through tribes who counted their wealth in rifles and looked on killing as the proper duty of man! But this view was not universal in India, still less in England, where there was an anxious obsession with the Russian advance in Asia. While the British had advanced 1,500 miles, from Madras to Peshawar, the Russians had moved 2,000 miles to the frontiers of Afghanistan. A Russian advance through a hostile Afghanistan was one thing; it would be quite another if the Russians had such influence in Afghanistan that they could build up a base in Kabul and advance on India from that.

Lawrence's policy was described, first in mockery by his opponents, later in praise by his friends, as one of "masterly inactivity." His successor, Lord Mayo, was more positive; he met the Amir, Sher Ali, at Amballa and explained his policy. The days of annexation were past; we had no such ambitions. But we did want a strong Afghanistan with a stable ruler, friendly to us and independent of Russia – and therefore we would help the Amir when he was in need, with money, arms, perhaps even men. And we would use diplomatic pressure to make Russia respect Afghan territory. This policy was broadly acceptable to both the British parties: Mayo had been appointed by Disraeli but served under Gladstone. But his successor, Lord Northbrook, was Gladstone's man, and his emphasis as Viceroy was on peace, on sound administration, on keeping expenditure below income, preventing famine, lowering taxes, at all of which he was quietly successful. In 1873, the Amir, Sher Ali, alarmed by a Russian move forward, begged Northbrook for a closer alliance. Northbrook, harking back to the policy of masterly inactivity, refused. Sher Ali therefore felt he could not afford to rebuff Russia so firmly as before.

Meanwhile, in Europe, Disraeli was in power and a Russian move towards the

continued on p. 1510

Lord Mayo (centre) entertains Sher Ali, Amir of Afghanistan, in 1869. Ali (left of Mayo) was a pawn in the Anglo-Russian tug-of-war over his territory from 1863 to 1879.

THE MONUMENTS

The seat of the British government in India, until the move to Delhi in 1912, was Government House, Calcutta. It was built in 1803 by the fourth Governor-General, Lord Wellesley, as a personal if grandiose expression of the magnificence of British power, then still confined to pockets of land across the subcontinent. Its neo-classical lines, he hoped, would banish all commercial taint from British rule and establish the Company representative as, no longer a trader, but a "prince in a palace." Indeed the palace was so costly that one mischievous chronicler maintained that "the tears" of East India Company Directors, who bore the cost, "cemented each fair wall."

From the 1860s, "Lord Wellesley's pride," as it was known, was shuttered for seven months of the year, while the Viceroys retreated 1,000 miles northwest to the cool of Simla in the Himalayas. There the Viceregal Lodge became the summer seat of government.

Government House, Calcutta, had a dome which, to Curzon, lay "like a dish-cover" on the roof.

Portraits of early Governors-General hang in the Government House Council Room where the Viceroys chaired regular meetings with advisers.

OF BRITISH POWER

The Government House Throne Room was the scene of the most solemn state functions – durbars, levées and receptions for honoured guests.

In the summer, the Viceregal Lodge in Simla – with its temperate garden – bore a pleasant resemblance to an English stately home.

Balkans had almost led to war. The British government felt that Russia should be checked in Asia and proposed to move troops up to the Afghan frontier and demand from Sher Ali the presence of British agents at Kandahar and Herat as well as Kabul. Northbrook disliked imperial chess; he demurred, remembering his own refusal of a closer alliance and knowing that Sher Ali would regard this as highly provocative. The Afghans had not forgotten Auckland's war and believed that a British Resident at Kabul would be an interference in their affairs and the prelude to annexation. There was thus a major difference of view between the Viceroy and the home government, and soon another arose. Northbrook's government, in the interests of Indian trade, had put duties on imported cotton goods; Disraeli's government, in the interests of Lancashire, demanded that they should be taken off. Northbrook resigned.

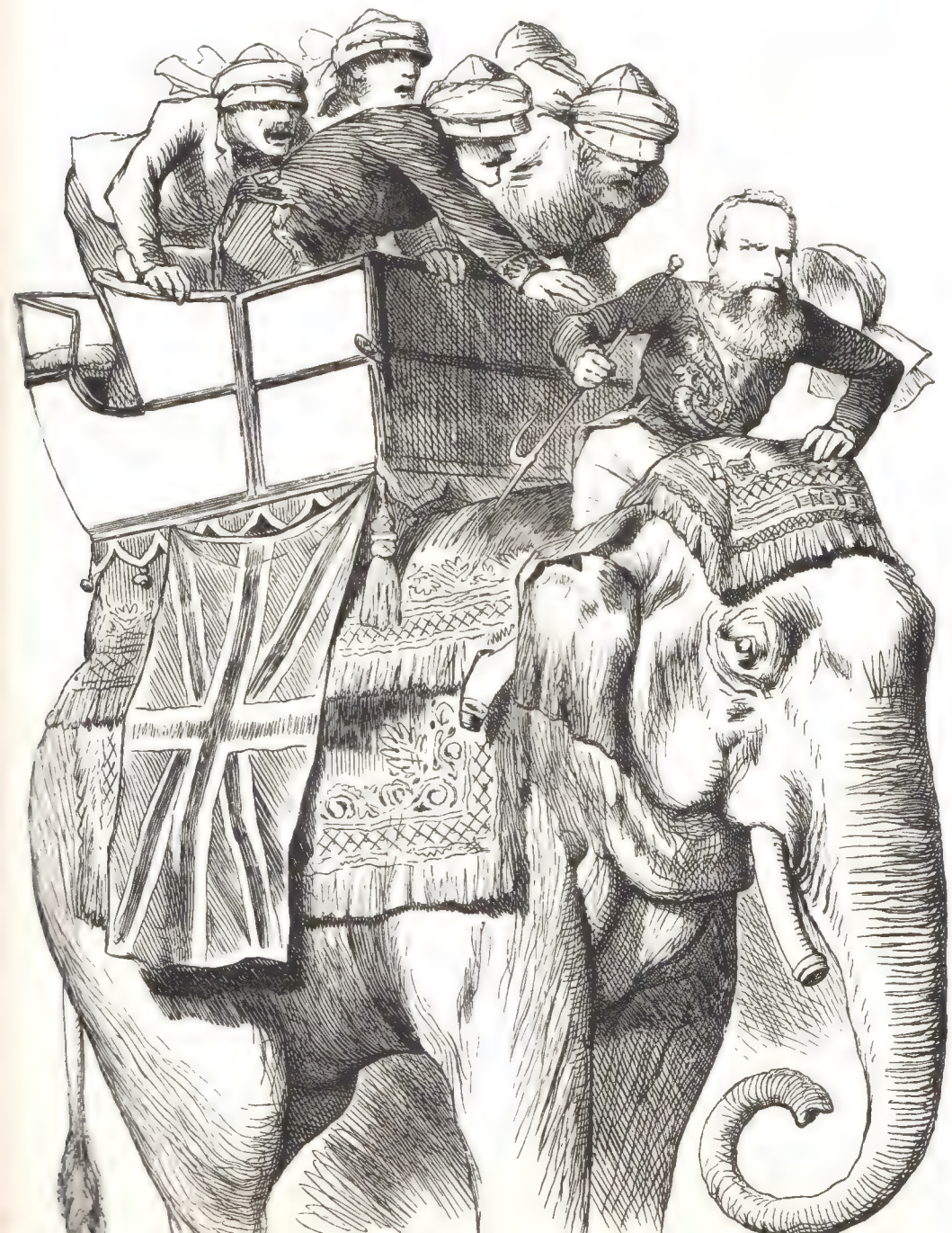
Lord Lytton, a professional diplomat, took his place in 1876. He entered enthusiastically into Disraeli's views, but, as Northbrook had foreseen, Sher Ali could not accept a British Resident at Kabul and retain the confidence of his people. The Second Afghan War followed; Sher Ali died, his son made peace on British terms and a Resident was sent to Kabul. But there was a popular rising and the Resident was murdered with his escort within six weeks of his arrival. Once again the British found themselves supporting an Amir whose people rejected him as a puppet; once again, they had to bring him to India and keep him as a pensioned exile. The aggressive policy of Disraeli and Lytton had failed.

Disraeli went out of office in 1880, and so sharp had been parliamentary criticism of his Afghan policy, and Lytton's execution of it, that Lytton had no alternative but to resign too. Thus two Viceroys in succession had demonstrated how close the connection with the government in Britain had become.

Lord Ripon, who succeeded Lytton, was fortunate to find an Afghan chief, Abdur Rahman, who was strong enough to establish himself at Kabul and unite his country once more. He kept it peaceful for 20 years, with a subsidy from the British but no Resident at Kabul and no "peaceful penetration" by such means as roads or telegraphs. In the Second Afghan War, as in the First, the Afghans had in the end got their way.

Ripon was a Liberal of Gladstone's school and his administration marked the beginning of a cautious advance towards a more democratic system of government, chiefly in the realm of local government. But he suffered one serious set-back, which underlined another limitation on the Viceroy's power, a force that was steadily to decline but could not wholly be ignored. This was the opinion of Europeans, particularly of businessmen in Calcutta. In most of India, a sessions judge of Indian birth was debarred from trying a European; Ripon and his advisers regarded this as unjust and humiliating and proposed in a measure known as the Ilbert Bill to abolish the distinction. There was an outraged howl from the Calcutta Press, which received some covert support from the services. Ripon eventually gave in to this clamour and modified the bill, providing that a European could claim trial by a jury, of whom half must be Europeans. But this made a new distinction on grounds of race and emphasized the fact that Indians were *not* tried by jury, but by a sessions judge, helped by assessors whose views he could disregard if he wished.

Nonetheless, Ripon's Viceroyalty, from 1880 to 1884, indicated to Indians that there was a belief in Britain that free institutions must in the end be applied to India and it led to the formation in 1885, with some British support, of the



In a *Punch* cartoon about a descreditable episode in 1883, the mutinous British community commandeers the howdah of India and compels Lord Ripon, demoted to mahout, to steer away from his plan for allowing Indians to judge Europeans in court.

Indian National Congress. Thus it was the beginning of national awakening and the effort for independence.

There had been sharp contrast between Northbrook and Lytton, between Lytton and Ripon. But it had been due to differences in policy in London and underlined the Viceroy's position as agent of the British Cabinet. Now came a period in which differences between the parties in Britain were, at any rate on Indian affairs, less acute. The terms of the three Viceroys who led up to Lord Curzon were correspondingly placid. Indian nationalism grew fast; year by year Indians became more ready to take for themselves the kind of steps which the school of Dalhousie had wished to thrust upon them. There was a minor constitutional advance; skirmishes took place on the frontier; Upper Burma was annexed. But in retrospect it was an uneventful period.

The great machine pounded smoothly on its well-oiled way. Messengers brought piles of locked boxes to Viceregal Lodge and toiled back with them to the Secretariat next day; the Viceregal court observed its own peculiar protocol. Visitors to Simla, if they belonged to the official hierarchy or if, although outside it, they considered themselves sufficiently important, hired a rickshaw or rode on a horse to Viceregal Lodge; here at the gatehouse, under the eyes of magnificent scarlet-coated sentries and messengers, they wrote their names in His Excellency's book and left cards for His Excellency's staff – virtually a request for Viceregal hospitality.

The Viceregal staff sorted the applicants into those deserving invitations to lunch, to dinner, to a ball or to a garden-party, and in due course the invitations went out. The guests would be greeted by aides-de-camp and eventually marshalled for His Excellency's entry. Each would be introduced by the Aide-de-Camp in Waiting and would bow or curtsy; then each male would lead in his appointed partner to his appointed place. There he would sit, scrupulously dividing his smiles and conversation between his two neighbours until it was time to move to sofas. Now the most important lady who had not sat next to the Viceroy at dinner would be led up to his sofa for five minutes' conversation, after which she would be led away and another would take her place. And this would go on till His Excellency escaped to his office boxes or to bed.

The Viceroy had also to show India that he really existed and at the same time convince himself of the reality of the land he ruled. When he went on tour – and this normally took up a good deal of a Viceroy's year – he was still pursued by files, though not in such overwhelming bulk. The Viceregal saloons would in these latter days carry him and his staff swiftly and comfortably across India but at his destination there would still be the ceremonial receptions; there would be experimental farms to inspect, universities and hospitals and exhibitions to open; his host would also have arranged

Lord Dufferin (centre) holds a levée in the Grand Throne Room of the Palace of Mandalay to mark Britain's annexation of Upper Burma in 1886.

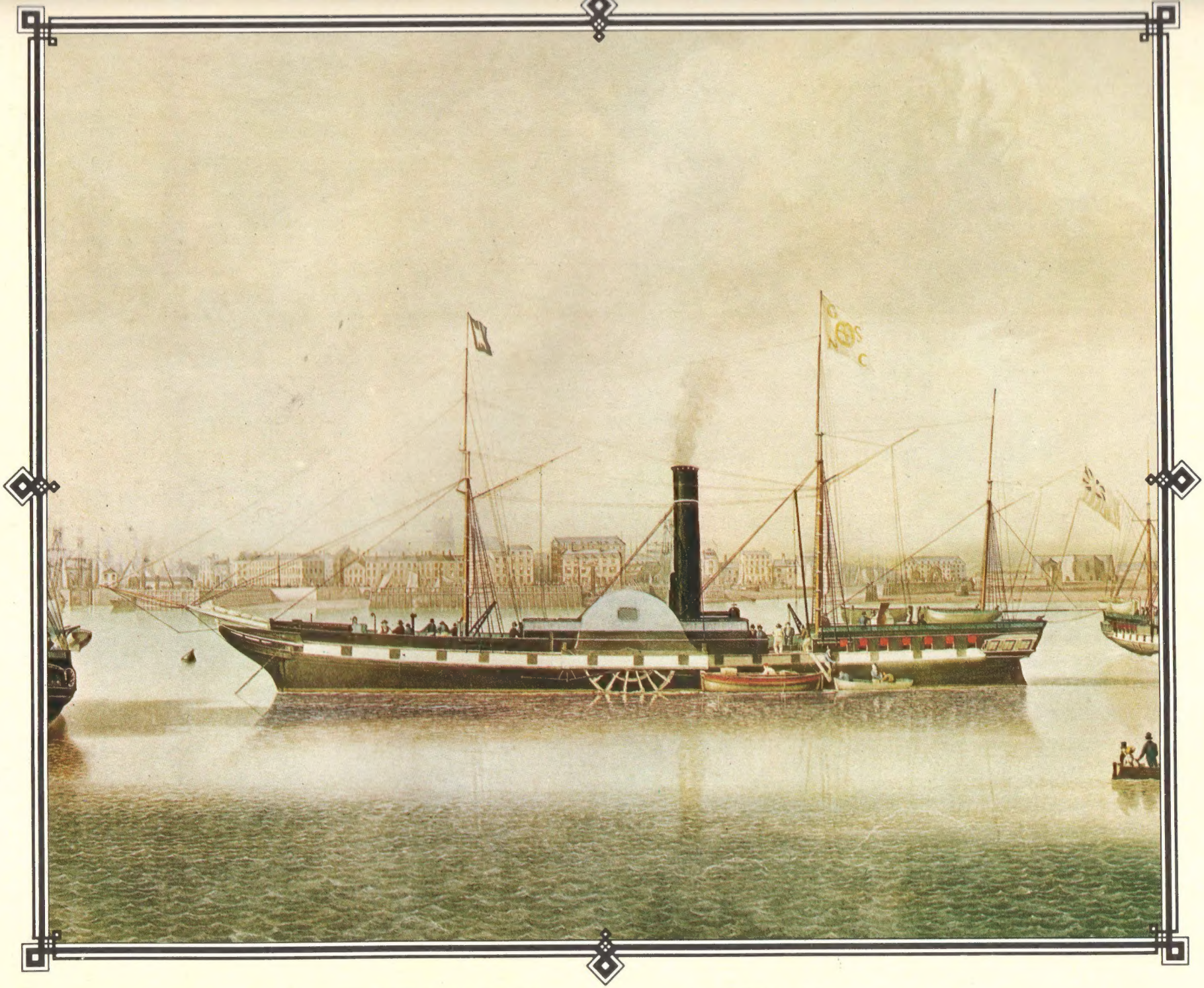
tiger-shoots, polo matches and displays of tent-pegging. The Viceroy had to show himself at the racecourse if he went to a provincial capital; he must appear in public at parades and in processions if he went to visit an Indian prince.

Every Head of State must perform some of these decorative functions, but few give so much of their time as the Viceroy was expected to give and few Heads of State are also Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs. It seems possible that from the time of, say, Lord Ripon onwards, the immense effort involved in this exercise in public relations was directed to the wrong audience. It was directed to English officials, to the businessmen of Calcutta, to the Army, to the princes of India – but not noticeably to the new Indian middle classes and the products of the new universities, who were the people of the future.

In 1898, India received the most regal of modern Viceroys, Lord Curzon. He saw himself as the supreme embodiment of imperial authority; he was, like Dalhousie, determined to reform India from the top. His remarkable story will be told in issue 59 of this history. But neither he, nor the last nine Viceroys who followed him, ending in 1948 with Lord Mountbatten, could escape the hard reality that by the 20th Century the Viceroy had become virtually an extension into Asia of the British Cabinet rather than an absolute monarch. The Viceroy could hardly help sharing London's insensitivity to Indian opinion. And in fact for this reason, it can be argued that the inactive Viceroys were the most successful. In the Indian system the best District Officer was the man who was idle but alert, ready to let his subordinates do their own work so long as they told him what they were doing and kept to his general line. The Viceroy was a District Officer writ large: was the same thing perhaps true of him? It seems arguable that such men as Cornwallis, Bentinck and Northbrook, who leaned on their advisers and worked through the system, built more lastingly than the brilliant and masterful men who felt they had to do everything themselves. And after all, two of the most masterful were recalled, another virtually killed himself by overwork and produced a massive rebellion.

It is arguable – but not wholly sustainable. There must be a point in the body politic where the initiative for change arises; towards the end this lay with the Indian middle classes, but in the early stages it lay most often with the Governors-General. Their power was great and on the whole they used it well. For integrity, ability, industry and beneviolence there is no parallel succession of rulers, no line of Kings, Emperors, Popes or Presidents to stand beside them ❧

Rivalling the Queen's Household Cavalry in splendour, the Viceroy's ceremonial bodyguard was fitting testimony to his power and prestige.



S.S. Wilberforce at Hull, 1838